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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR (Estonia)

DATE DISTR. 30 Apr 1953

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SUBJECT Shipbuilding Yards in Tallin

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NO. OF PAGES 3

PLACE ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS. (LISTED BELOW)

DATE ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

DATE OF INFORMATION

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1. Prior to World War I there were four shipbuilding yards operating in Tallin .

(a) "Vene-Balti" (Russian Baltic).—This yard employed approximately 12 thousand persons, had seven or eight ways, and about seven or eight cranes.

(b) "Becker".—This yard employed about six thousand persons, had four very long ways, and four cranes. The largest crane had a capacity of 100 tons (1 ton equals 1.102 English tons). The Russian warship of 12,000 gross regular tons "Lennik" was built here. This yard, as well as the Vene-Balti, was destroyed during World War I and remained out of operation up to the time of my departure in 1944. The yards of both shipyards were used to house small factories which rented space.

(c) "Nobelessner-Werft".—This yard employed about 400 persons had one way with a capacity of one thousand tons. This yard also had 10 graving docks with cranes and carried out only ship repairs. It was not under government control.

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(d) "Rugi Sadama Tehased" (Government Yards).—This yard has been in continuous operation since the Czarist regimes. It is located next to the main harbor on the eastern edge of the city. Yards were about one square kilometer in size and consisted of three floating cranes, three dry docks, and about ten buildings. The floating cranes were of about 100 ton capacity each and the dry docks had a capacity of eight thousand tons each. All of ten buildings, brick constructed, were one-floor high and about 75 x 20 meters in size. The shops had all necessary equipment such as rolls, presses, lathes, milling machines, planers, and shapers, as well as a small foundry. The rolls were approximately three meters in width and consisted of three stations. There was a railroad siding by every building. The floating-type cranes were old, dating from Czarist times, but in good condition. All materials used for making repairs in this yard were imported. The only local materials used were wood and cement. Electricity came from "ellama", located about 40 miles from Tallin . The small casting foundry produced various parts for ship repairs, such as engine heads, shafts, other engine parts, rudders, etc. The largest casting produced was about 300 kgs. Of the 700 employees, 100 were in administration, 20 were special technicians, and the remaining one-half were skilled shipyard workers. Several automatic welding machines for light and small metal parts were imported from Germany and were in good condition up to the time of my departure (1944). There were no assembly line techniques at this plant.

Maximum potential for repairs was a ship of about eight thousand tons with two to three thousand p.s. (one p.s. equals 1.014 h.p.). Engines could be repaired in three days if only minor repairs were necessary. If a general overhauling were in order, this would take about a week to ten days.

2. The controlling Ministry for government shipyards was the Department of Ways of the Ministry of Transportation.

3. The only new ship constructed, a 500-ton ice breaker, was at the Novelessner-Werft shipyard. It was much cheaper to buy old ships from a foreign country such as Sweden, the UK, Germany, or Finland, and repair and recondition them than to construct new ships. This was because labor and materials for repairs were much cheaper in Estonia than elsewhere.

4. Up to 1944, there were no new shipyards planned or under construction.

5. Navy ships undergoing repairs at "Rugi Sadama Tehased" had the guns removed and taken to the naval arsenal in Tallin . This arsenal was located in Soo St and was officially called the War Ministry Arsenal. Here, also, were manufactured the 7.89 mm rifle and its cartridges. there was an automatic ammunition machine of German design being operated by women. This machine was later removed to the USSR by the Soviets.

6. The Navy had a small ordnance plant located near the Nobelessner-Werft yards. Old mines left over from the Czarist times were reconditioned and reloaded with fresh explosives in this plant. Other underwater ordnance such as torpedoes and depth charges came from the UK. Diesel engines, as well as steam engines, were built at the Franz Krull and the Ilmarina plants, both of which were located about two miles from the Nobelessner-Werft shipyard. one 200 h p Diesel engine built at Franz Krull and one 3,000 h p steam engine built at Ilmarina. Most of the other steam engines were of a stationary type. Ship engines were usually rebuilt right at the yards.

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